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Good morning. Our children may be dismissed to Children's Church. Let's start with a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this beautiful day. Thank you for this gathering of brothers and sisters that we have, that we come together and have fellowship with one another and with you. Thank you for the love that you've placed in our hearts towards one another and the family that you've brought us all together and formed us into. We pray God, as we study from your word, that you will open our minds and our understanding so we can really see what's going on and really hear what you're speaking to us from these holy scriptures. And please guide my words as I speak so that I say just the right thing. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen. Alright. A couple things I wanted to kind of... Whenever I finish one of these, I always think, "Oh, I should have said that." And so last week I wanted to mention just two things. We've been talking about Ruth, in case you're new here, I see some new faces. We did Ruth chapter one last week, and we talked a lot about the meaning of the names of the characters in Ruth. And we talked about how the two sons, their names meant sickness and wasting away. And we talked about using our words as a power for life and goodness in this world and not for death. And I wanted to mention that I learned that. That was brought to my attention by a man named Bobby Connor. And I wanted to give credit where it was due. And to be fair, everything that I teach, I've probably heard from one place or another, but I can't remember all of them, but I remember that one. The other thing I wanted to mention was Moab, the country that Alemolec took his family to. If you guys ever want to go there, you need to go with my parents next time to go to Jordan. Because the area called Moab is actually part of the much... Nowadays, it's part of the much larger country called Jordan, kingdom called Jordan. And so it's kind of down in the south. It's just a part of that much larger kingdom. But if you ever decide you want to take a trip to the Middle East, Jordan is a very safe place to go. And I'm sure they would love to take you. Okay. But yeah, so here's what happened in Chapter 1. A man named Alemolec had his wife Naomi and their two sons. There was a famine in the land of Israel. And so rather than... We believe that God brought the famine because of the wickedness of the people. But rather than repenting and seeking God's favor and goodness, this man, Alemolec, took his family off to this country of Moab. And the Moabites were not friendly with the Israelites. And it turns out that this man, Alemolec, ended up dying, and his sons ended up marrying, but then they died. So all we have left now is Alemolec's wife, Naomi, and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. And Naomi here is back home. There's bread. The famine's over. So she decides she's going to go home, and the two daughters-in-laws are coming with her. But she says, "You guys don't want to come here because you're not going to find husbands in that country, and I'm not going to have any more sons, and you might as well just stay here and find a good Moabite husband because you're Moabite women." And one of the daughters decides that's the way to go. That was Orpah. She stayed behind. But Ruth said, "I'm going to go where you go. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die and get buried, I will die and be buried." Ruth makes this covenant commitment. She says, "I'm going with you, Naomi." And so they end up walking back through the wilderness, back to Bethlehem. They get to town, and their arrival causes a big commotion. And that's going to be important, as we see later on. And that chapter ends by telling us that they get back to Bethlehem right at the time of the barley harvest. And that's important, too, as we'll see. But now, today, we're studying Ruth chapter 2, starting with verse 1. "There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of a limlech. His name was Boaz. So Ruth the Moabites said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him, in whose sight I may find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter.' And she left and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of a limlech. Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, 'The Lord be with you.' And they answered, 'The Lord bless you.' Then Boaz said to his servant, who was in charge of the reapers, 'Whose young woman is this?' So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, 'The young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.' And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.' Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'You will listen, my daughter. Will you not?' 'Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close to my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you're thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.' So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground and said to him, 'Why have I found favor in your eyes that you should take notice of me since I am a foreigner?' And Boaz answered and said to her, 'It has been fully reported to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.' Then she said, 'Let me find favor in your sight, my Lord, for you have comforted me and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.' So chapter two starts off with this new character. His name is Boaz. Boaz's name means 'in him is strength.' We learned that Boaz is related to a limilec, Naomi's dead husband. And so we learned that kind of third party. And what happens is Ruth says to Naomi, she says, 'We want to go out in the fields and start collecting grain so that we have something to eat.' Now, that might sound kind of weird that you just go into someone's field and start picking stuff, but when God was giving the children of Israel commands, like, 'This is how you should live,' He actually had a command in there for this very thing. Basically, God told them, He said, 'When you're collecting the grain, don't take all of it. Don't leave little bits in the corner, leave little bits on the ground and whatever, and people who are poor and needy can come and collect it.' We find that in Leviticus 19.9, when He says this, 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.' Later on in Leviticus 23.22, 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God.' In Deuteronomy 24.19, 'When you reap your harvest in the field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back and get it. It shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.' So the first principle, the first lesson that we're going to look at here today is this. God wants us to live a generous life. He wants us to be generous and to not obsess over making sure we've collected every single little penny and that it was absolutely perfect and there was no loss. He wants us to be generous. And he promises that when we are generous, that he will bless us and take care of us. Remember when Jesus was talking in Matthew, he said, 'Do not worry about what you're going to eat or what you're going to wear.' He says, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and all those things will be added unto you. Be generous and God will take care of you.' And this is the principle of the kingdom. God wants us to live generous lives because he is a generous God. He's lived generously towards us and everything he wants us to do should be a reflection of him. So he's like, 'I've been generous towards you who were poor spiritually and now I want you to be generous towards the poor.' Now to be clear, some of us think, 'Well, I'm a generous person.' But when we think of that, what we're thinking of is like all of the nice presents we give to our friends or the nice parties we throw. But that's not what this is talking about. This isn't talking about being nice to your friends and family. This is talking about the poor, the strangers, the fatherless, the widows. God is saying, 'Take care of those who can't take care of themselves. Be generous towards those.' In fact, Jesus also said, 'When you throw a party, don't invite your friends and the people who can repay your kindness.' He says, 'Go out on the street and invite the poor and the lame and the beggars who can't repay. And when you do that, you'll have treasure in heaven. Your heavenly Father will reward you when you are generous towards those who cannot repay.' So the principle here is, 'Live a generous life and you will not be in want. Have faith that God will provide enough for you and that He will also provide enough for others to be blessed through you. Even if you find you spill some from your hand, at the end of the day you will not be lacking.' And to be clear, we're not talking about being wasteful. This is generosity. This is not, 'I'm just going to pay whatever. I'm not going to look for a good deal.' But with the money and with the things God blesses you with, be generous towards those who are poor and needy. So, Ruth, and I apologize because I am terrible with names, and I'm sure that at some point, either last week or this week or next week, I'm going to switch Ruth and Naomi and just mess up people's names. So, I apologize in advance. So, Ruth says, 'I'm going to take advantage of this law, this custom, and I'm just going to start going out in the fields and start picking up the little leftover bits of green so that we have some food.' And the fields, they were these giant massive fields and then people owned certain parcels of that field. And so she's making her way around and she gets to the field of this man named Boaz. And so she ends up staying in this field, and I suspect, and I have no proof, I suspect that it is the quality of the character of the men who are working for Boaz that they are very faithful about making sure stuff gets left behind them, that they're faithful about obeying that commandment. And I suspect that because when Boaz, it says Boaz came from Bethlehem, he comes to his reapers and he says, 'The Lord be with you.' And they answered him, 'The Lord bless you.' And here we see this picture that Boaz is this godly man. He is a good, honorable employer. His employees love him and he's apparently hired good, godly men to work in his field. So we see this really just godly exchange take place between Boaz and his workers. And so that's why I suspect that Naomi ended up in that field because I believe that those godly men were probably obeying that command that, 'Hey, there's a needy woman. Let's make sure that we leave some behind as the law commands.' And Boaz looks, and there's this woman out there collecting, and there's a couple verses in here that make me suspect that she physically looks different than the other women. And I don't know what a Moabite-ist looked like all those years ago versus what an Israelite looked like all those years ago, but there's a couple verses, and I'll try and point them out when we get to them, that makes it sound like she just has a different physical appearance, which makes sense. And Boaz says, 'Who is this?' And the workers say, 'This is that Moabite-ist woman who came with Naomi.' And I think it's funny that that simple little explanation was enough to tell Boaz, 'That's who this is.' You know, the news of when they got back to town, it said that the news went all over town. Naomi came back with this daughter-in-law, and here's evidence of that, that the Reapers, they just say, 'Oh yeah, that's that Moabite-ist woman that came back with Naomi.' And Boaz is like, 'Oh yeah, I've heard all about that because everyone's talking about it.' So I just find that interesting, that just such a simple explanation, and he instantly is caught up on what's going on here. And so they're like, 'Yeah, she said, 'Can I glean here?' And we said, 'Sure.' And she's been working hard.' They're like, 'She only took a short break in the middle of the day, but she's been working hard out here all day.' And so Boaz comes up to her and says, 'Okay, I want you to listen, all right?' He says, 'Don't go anywhere else. Don't go into anyone else's field. Don't just stay here, stay with my guys.' And again, to me, this tells me that he's hired godly men, because he's concerned for her well-being, and he knows that his men are going to treat her respectfully and in a godly manner. And I think that that's important for any of us who are managers, or who are other over-people, that we choose men and women of character as we are in charge of choosing our employees. He says, 'Stay close to my men.' He's like, 'They're going to leave food behind, as is the case, but they're also going to keep an eye on you. They're going to draw water out of the well when you're thirsty for something to drink.' And he says, 'Just stay around here.' And I've also commanded them not to touch you. So apparently, the men in the other field were not nearly as nice. So he says, 'Just stay here. You'll be fine. You'll be taken care of.' And she says, 'Why are you doing this for me? This is so wonderful. What have I done to deserve this?' And he says, in verse 11, 'It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother in the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before.' This is the second point I kind of want to make here today is, Ruth has suffered a lot. Her husband has died, and her brother-in-law, her father-in-law, have died, and she's left her country, and she's now living in a country where, presumably, a lot of the people don't really like her because of her nationality. She has got plenty of excuse to be grumpy and moody and upset, and yet she has chosen to pursue godliness. And that's the second thing I want to point out here today, is God rewards godliness. Respond to your adversity appropriately because God rewards godliness. She, rather than being sulky and moody and whatever and not trusting anyone, she pursued godliness. And what has happened now, we see that she is being blessed. And she's also, and this is getting a little deep here, she's literally pursuing godliness by being a good person, but also metaphorically, she has chosen to go from the land of the pagans into the land of God. She has left a pagan culture for a godly culture, so she has pursued godliness, she has risked her life, her safety, her family, her material possessions, she's risked it all on God, and God is now rewarding her. We see God behind the scenes, he has supernaturally brought her into this field of this person who is actually a close relative, she doesn't even know that yet, but this guy is being good to her, taking care of her, making sure she's getting her food. She chose the godly path and God is rewarding her. And so that's the second thing to try and look at here is don't let your circumstances tempt you into becoming a miserable, moody hermit. Pursue godliness, do the right thing, do the good thing, pleasantness, trusting God's faithfulness that He is going to take care of you, and He will take care of you. James 5.16 says, "The prayer of a righteous man avails much." If you want your prayers to be effective, be righteous. John 15.7 says, "If you abide in me and my words in you, then what you ask I will give you." So again, we see here that this godliness, this stain close to God, stain in Him is the key to unlocking God's blessing, God's answering of your prayers. And I've seen, unfortunately, so many people who get hurt, or situations get bad, and they get just mad and angry, and they offer up these prayers out of anger, and they just assume and believe that those prayers aren't going to get answered, that God hates them, that He doesn't want to listen to them. And they offer up prayers that they just don't expect to get answered, and those prayers don't get answered. But when you pursue righteousness and godliness, and you believe that God hears you and He loves you, He will be there for you. He will provide and take care of you. All right, let's press on towards the end of the chapter here. Starting at verse 14, "Boaz said to her at mealtime, 'Come here and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.' So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her, and she ate and was satisfied, and she kept some back. And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, 'Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also, let grain from the bundles fall purposefully for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.' So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied." So here again we see Boaz looking out for Ruth, taking care of her. And he's even going above and beyond the call of duty, and he's saying, 'What God commanded him to leave behind, he's saying leave even more for her.' And in addition to that, when it's mealtime, he's sharing food with her. And even after she's full, she took some of the food. She's probably thinking of Naomi, 'I'm going to take some of this home and give it to her.' She ends up coming home with an ephah of barley. And I didn't know what that meant, so I did some research, and there's actually kind of some debate, some question about how much is an ephah of barley, but it seems to be about five to ten gallons. And I was really surprised at that, because, I mean, yeah, if you're just coming along after the reapers just picking up their scraps, I wouldn't expect, even after a whole day, to come home with five to ten gallons. But that's just evidence that he's looking out for her. And so she gets home, and her mother-in-law says, 'Where?' Naomi's like, 'What's going on?' She goes, 'Something's up.' She's like, 'This is way too much barley for your first day of gleaning.' 'So where have you gleaned today, and where did you work?' Blessed be the one who took notice of you.' So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and she said, 'The man's name with whom I work today is Boaz.' Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead.' And Naomi said to her, 'This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives.' Ruth the Moabite said, 'He also said to me, 'You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.' And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, 'It is good, my daughter, that you go out with these young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field.' So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz to glean until the end of the barley harvest and wheat harvest, and she dwelt with her mother-in-law. The last lesson that I want to pull out of this, in order to get this lesson, we have to remember what I said when I started my teaching last Sunday, and that is, the proper way to read the Old Testament is to realize that Jesus is on every page. The whole point of the Old Testament is to point towards Jesus, okay? Or as Chuck Missler says, 'The New Testament is in the Old Testament, concealed.' So when biblical scholars have taken this view, they have decided, and most agree, that Boaz in this story represents Jesus. And there's some debate about how Naomi and Ruth play into it, but on some level everyone agrees that Ruth is us, the church, the people Jesus is saving. And so, Ruth is there collecting food. She is there in the fields of Jesus collecting food, and our spiritual food is the Word of God. It is the place we go to learn and for knowledge and wisdom, is the thing that satisfies our soul. There's a lot of places in this world that promise to satisfy you. There's a lot of sources that you can go to for wisdom and knowledge and satisfaction, but none of them compare to the Word of God. Because, and this is the difference between the Internet and Oprah and wherever else you go, the difference between all that and the Word of God is that the Word of God in that field is Boaz, is Jesus. When you go to the Word of God to find and to glean truth, to glean wisdom, to glean spiritual nourishment, you have someone there deliberately leaving stuff in your path for you to find and for you to be fed and nourished. And not only that, He leaves enough there for you to take and share with others. Not just enough for you, but enough to share. I feel like I preach this every week. Do not neglect your time in the Word of God. I'm not just talking about reading words, checking off your Bible in a year list. I'm talking about meditating on and chewing and digesting the truth that is written on those pages, getting it down into your spirit, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart and revealing to you what is there, what is going on. This is your spiritual food. Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word in the mouth of God. You need to eat this spiritual food. You need to spend time in the Word. And it is going to be powerful and effective because Jesus is in that field. And He is looking out for you, taking care of you and making sure that that's there. So that's Ruth chapter two. And the three points we want to take away today are, number one, be generous. Be generous towards those who are in need. Number two, pursue godliness and God will reward you and take care of you. And number three, feed on the Word of God. Be generous, pursue godliness, feed on the Word of God. Let's have our quiet time. I think some of you maybe still feel like a stranger to the kingdom of God. You feel maybe like Ruth the Moabitez, who is just, you're around people and you think everyone is staring at you and that you stand out like a sore thumb, like you don't belong in the family of God, in the kingdom of God. But the good news is that there is someone there who is pursuing you, someone who has a heart of love for you and wants you in this kingdom, in this family. And they are going to keep showing you that kindness, all the kindness that God is going to keep loving you until you finally realize and believe that He truly wants you here and He truly wants you in this family. You are a part of it and this is a family made up of outsiders, made up of people who have all been brought in, who are all on the outside, and we've all been brought in. And you have just as much a right to be here as the rest of us. So continue to press in, seek Jesus, seek His face, because He loves you and He's leading you home. Just be faithful and follow. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, dear Jesus, you are so wonderful and so beautiful. And I pray that you, if there is anyone here, God, who is not yet convinced of how much you love them, that you could just continue to pour out your love, pour out your spiritual food for them, continue to lead them and draw them until they believe, as the rest of us have finally come to accept and believe that we were all outsiders and you have brought us all in and you love us all. As we go out throughout this week and through the rest of our lives, help us to be generous towards those who are less fortunate. Please remind us in our bad situations to pursue godliness. Remind us that you honor and respect that attitude. And finally, God, as we listen to You, as we read Your Word, as we try and grow in our spiritual wisdom, please leave for us that spiritual food in our path, that we can be nourished and fed and that we can grow and be strong. In Jesus' name, amen.